



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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CONTACT: VINCE TROIA

615.313.4561 (OFFICE)

VINCE.TROIA@TN.ORG

BREDESEN PROCLAMATION RAISES AWARENESS OF ELDER ABUSE

STATE AGENCIES WORK TO STEM TIDE OF CRIMES AGAINST VULNERABLE ADULTS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Nearly 9,500 reports of adult abuse, neglect and/or financial exploitation were reported last year to the Tennessee Department of Human Services' Adult Protective Services (APS) unit. The number of reports has grown 23 percent in just five years.

To raise awareness of this crime, Governor Phil Bredesen has proclaimed June 15 "Elder Abuse Awareness Day" in Tennessee. The Department of Human Services and Commission on Aging and Disability are also working to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults.

"Abuse and neglect of our elderly and vulnerable adults is a serious and often unspoken problem that affects thousands of people in Tennessee," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "The governor and our state agencies are working together to alert the public that this is a crime which, by law, must be reported."

APS counselors assisted 11,000 individuals last year. More than a third of the cases involved neglect by others. Of these, the perpetrator was related to the victim 90 percent of the time and was the spouse or the adult child of the victim.

DHS and the Commission on Aging and Disability are partnering with the Tennessee Vulnerable Adult Coalition (TVAC) to stem the growing problems of abuse – whether physical, sexual or emotional – neglect, and financial exploitation of elderly and vulnerable adults.

There will be visual reminders the night of June 15 as well. The State Capitol will be illuminated in purple from June 11 through June 18 as part of the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day campaign. The Sudekum Planetarium pyramid at Nashville's Adventure Science Center also will shine with purple light. Purple was chosen as the "awareness color" when the international event was launched in 2006.

For a list of all Elder Abuse Awareness Day events across the state, please visit the TVAC website at www.tvaonline.org.

For more information on elder abuse, visit www.tn.gov/humanserv. To report abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult, call APS toll free **1-888-APS-TENN (1-888-277-8366)**.

CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37248
615.313.4700

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